National Commission on the Future of the Army
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13 1444 November 2015

NCFA Staff Paper
Talent Management, Leader Development, and Education

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Improved talent management across the entire Army is likely the most important method to prepare for a complex, unknowable future with rapidly changing technology and resources insufficient to prepare for all possible circumstances. In March 2015, Secretary Carter indicated winning the next war has more to do with human talent and out-thinking the enemy than advanced technology. Adjusting leader development, talent management, and education processes has the potential to improve the Army's ability to adapt available force structure and capabilities to the unknown future demands. New technology, advances in management science, and cultural changes suggest careful adjustment to the Army's accession, training, education, assignment, and personnel evaluations/assessments can improve the Army's agility, adaptability, and effectiveness. Past Army practices have produced many excellent leaders who have proven adaptability over the past 14 years of combat and set an example that Russia has followed to significantly improve Russian combat capabilities.

The assignment and evaluation system plays an important role in Army talent management by utilizing available skills, developing talent through experience, and promoting those with the potential to serve at higher ranks to fulfill current and future Army missions. Unfortunately, some Soldiers and civilians perceive Army assignment and evaluation decisions to be arbitrary. This perception has likely become more acute as promotion board selection rates decline to historical norms and the civilian work force downsizes. The training and education system works in conjunction with assignment and evaluation processes by improving and developing new skills to improve performance and enable and adaptation to changes in the strategic environment and enemy innovations. These systems also provide opportunities to assess and catalogue talents resident in the force, augmenting the normal Army evaluation process.

A successful talent management system enables the Army to understand where a wide variety of human capabilities reside within the Army. The system then matches these capabilities (talents) to requirements from operational organizations. When capability gaps exist, the system enables the development or recruitment of needed capabilities. Placing the "right person in the right place at the right time" is a common but only partially useful slogan because what is "right" depends on the situation. For example, job X may be the "right" job to develop an individual for future Army needs while job Y is the "right" job for current needs. Improved computing power and data management tools provide talent management opportunities unavailable in the past. Discussions with Army leaders indicate a perception of difficulty assigning Soldiers from one component to a position in a different component even when the skills align, which hinders integration between components.

ARMY AND DOD EFFORTS: The Army and DOD recognize the importance of building agile and adaptive leaders who can recognize and leverage opportunities. The need to improve the Army's human capital permeates many recent documents approved by the Army's senior leadership including: the Army Operating Concept (Oct 2014), Army Leader Development Strategy (Oct 2015), Army Human Dimension White Paper (Jun 2015), Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond (Sep 2015) and FM 6-22 Leader Development (Jun 2015). The Army has already attempted many activities to improve its human capital.   The Army already provides excellent opportunities for self-development including language courses, Army e-Learning, correspondence courses, certifications, tuition assistance, etc.

The Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis ran a pilot program, "Green Pages," to improve "talent matching" for Regular Army officers assignments in the Engineer (12), Strategist (FA59), and Adjutant General (42) branches. The program created a "market" for assignments allowing officers to "apply" for jobs and units to "hire" new officers in over a dozen iterations from Fiscal Year 2009 through FY 2011. The program demonstrated some successes but failed to generate sufficient support for further implementation, at least in part, due to the inability or unwillingness of units to sufficiently understand or explain job requirements and screen candidates. At this time, no formal AAR is available.

The U.S. Military Academy used lessons from the Green Pages pilots to implement a new branching system assessing cadet talents, helping cadets understand their individual talents, and then assigning cadets to branches suited to their personal talents in a "regulated marketplace." The assessment includes a series of cognitive and non-cognitive tests measuring experiences, attributes, personality traits, behavior, and interests. Anecdotally, the new branching system has improved talent management and the Army is attempting to expand the system to ROTC schools; however, true evaluation of the systems impact will not be apparent for several years. The system also provides the Army with "richer talent data about its officer human capital." Cadet Command plans to adopt the full three-phase system with the Class of 2016 and Officer Candidate School (OCS) has implemented select elements of the program due to its shorter production timeline. OCS now considers unique talents for specific branch assignments outside of the previous OCS order of merit list methodology .

The Combined Arms Center has established Army University to improve the Army's educational enterprise and increase academic rigor across all professional military education programs. Army University is also establishing a comprehensive and universal transcript outlining the training, education, and experience of Soldiers. These transcripts have the potential to help Soldiers, improve the Army's ability to understand the talents resident in the Army, and set a standard for all military services.[1]

DOD has implemented efforts to improve civilian performance for well over a decade. In 2006, The Department of Defense implemented the National Security Personnel System (NSPS)

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[1] The Joint Staff's Military Education Coordination Council has expressed interest in the concept and Army plans as something other services might be able to adopt.

to initiate a "pay-for-performance" system, which was developed without substantial labor union input. Labor union objections, perceptions of inequalities/favoritism in performance-based pay raises, and heavy administrative requirements persuaded Congress to rescind NSPS in 2009. The Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) had similar problems (except there are no unions) and Congress rescinded most of its provisions. However, there are a few corners of the federal government successfully implementing pay for performance such as DOD's National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which had a similar pay-for-performance process before NSPS or DCIPS began.

The Army is slowly implementing the One Army School System process (generally focused on improving professional military education (PME) efficiency and discussed in a separate NCFA staff paper), approved Army University for implementation, and is standing up a MG-led Talent Management Task Force (likely to support the DOD Future of the Force effort focused on assignments, evaluations, and compensation).

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is working to develop a series of personnel reforms under the umbrella of the "Force of the Future." These draft reforms have generated controversy between the Department and Services and likely fostered OSD's reluctance discuss the topic with the Commission. Despite the vast array of strategies and documents written by the Army, OSD, and think tanks, few substantive changes have occurred except revisions to Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reports that force raters to stratify subordinate performance. Arguably, senior leaders only began focusing on this issue over the past 18 months as demonstrated by the several recently developed or revised strategy documents on talent management and leader development.

FINDINGS: The Army and DOD want to improve their human capital but have had difficulty executing and sustaining changes.

1. Improving the Army's ability to understand its Soldier and civilian talents as well as talent requirements offers opportunities to improve performance against current requirements and unanticipated future demands through better personnel development and assignment.

2. The Army is not a civilian organization and cannot be managed like one. However, 21st century technology and civilian talent management programs offer potential opportunities to improve the Army's development and management of its human capital if used appropriately.

3. The Army's talent management system should foster integration across components.

4. Influence from Congress and unions have made changes to the civilian personnel system difficult.

5. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) (10 USC 645, 10 USC 619, and 10 USC 632) prevent service secretaries from exempting any officer from a promotion board even if they have extended time in civilian academic schooling or other broadening experiences.

6. The Army cannot simply stop to change its education, assignment, assessment, and evaluation systems for Soldiers or civilians. Significant changes, Green Pages, NSPS, etc., often require new cultural norms to succeed; a very high bar for pilot programs. Any new program requires an effective transition from the current system and will inherently impact some individuals negatively. Ensuring Congressional and other stakeholder buy-in for the transition and end state is essential for success and slow but necessary cultural adjustments.

7. The Army can choose to shape and lead a transformation in human capital management or it can wait, react, and follow. Both waiting and leading present substantial risks to future Army capabilities.

PROPOSALS: The Commission should endorse the Army's intentions, current efforts, and continued funding to improve Army human capital management. Additionally, Commissioners should consider the utility of the below proposals to augment current Army efforts. Most require changes to procedures not additional funding.

To improve Talent Management the DOD should:
1. Increase assignment flexibility by treating all Active Duty/Full Time Army positions as available for fill by any component if there is a qualified Soldier available for assignment. As necessary, adjust policy and law to allow appropriate Title 32 and Title 10 crossover.

2. Ask Congress to remove DOPMA restrictions preventing services from delaying Soldiers for promotion consideration as appropriate (e.g. participation in long-term broadening events)

3. Require Soldiers selected for full-time schooling to register with the National Guard and Army Reserve for potential assignment to and drill duty with RC units during schooling – dependent upon RC needs. There would be no changes to pay and allowances for this increase in AC-RC integration.

4. Improve civilian personnel management system to improve standards while preventing further reductions in morale.
   a. Require civilian Performance Improvement Plans to remain in files to prevent "yo-yo employees" and speed separation for poor performers.

b. Produce a plan to adjust law and policy to streamline procedures to remove poor performing civilians and change the perception that removing poor performing civilians is either too difficult or impossible (a legally incorrect perception). The plan should consider a process for publishing successful employee dismissal cases, without using PII or other specifics.

c. Produce an evaluation system, with the Office of Personnel Management, for Congressional approval that includes profiles for civilian supervisors and limits the number of top ratings, similar to Army officer and NCO evaluation reports or Marine Corps rater profiles.

d. Congress should create NDAA language to mandate performance as the first priority for consideration in force retention decisions. Current OPM prioritization makes performance the last of the 4 retention factors required by law.[2]

To improve Army education the Army should:

1. Increase the rigor of Army education courses for Soldiers and civilians. Most importantly, this requires raising the standards for students and making failure a real possibility. Professors upholding high standards should be rewarded instead of scrutinized and criticized.

   a. Develop guidance for promotion boards and assignment officers to give Soldiers who excel in education programs (top 20%) preferential treatment. A one page summary of AERs or unique notation on SRBs for above average performance could provide boards with a useful, and potentially "apples-to-apples," data point avoiding the need to sift through numerous AERs.

   b. Students should be allowed to "recycle" academic courses like Ranger school students. This has the potential to increase TTHS requirements and TDY costs.

2. Improve the quality of PME instructors to strengthen PME quality and rigor.

   a. Substantially simplify procedures for faculty to 1) apply for and accept research grants, 2) own copyrights for their work, and 3) accept travel expenses and honorariums if invited to speak on academic or industry-led panels.

   b. Allow PME schools shorter than 10 months to hire faculty using the greater flexibility allowed in Title 10 for specific PME schools longer than 10 months (Army War College, CGSC, etc.).

3. Develop a system to prevent Soldiers attending long broadening programs from non-selection at promotion or separation boards due to fewer operational assignments.

   a. Consider allowing Soldiers selected for broadening programs greater than 9 months to voluntarily change date of rank for promotion/retention board consideration only

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[2] The current four statutory criteria used to determine an employee's ranking during force reductions are: (1) tenure of employment, (2) Veteran's Preference, (3) length of service, and (4) performance ratings

  b. Consider allowing PME professors to delay board consideration for the length of teaching assignments

  c. Ensure minimum acceptable evaluation record for acceptance to fully-funded schooling makes promotion likely

5. The Army's two-star Talent Management Task Force should:

  a. Develop a market-based personnel management system (building on/learning from Green Pages) with appropriate intervention mechanisms to ensure smooth functioning and fulfillment of Army requirements (e.g. Ft. Polk, LA and Ft. Irwin, CA need good personnel as much as Germany, Hawaii, and Colorado).

  b. Develop a method for capturing the human skills and capabilities in the Army in a manner allowing easy use of commercial software (e.g. People Soft) and identification of people with particular skill sets. Implementation of a PeopleSoft solution would likely cost $1-$2 million as a one-time expense, such a system should fulfill 5a and 5b requirements.

  c. Develop methods for Army schools to assess and record individual talents. Such activities should cost less than $1 million as a one-time expense.

  d. Make examination of civilian talent management a line of effort.

  e. Establish firm qualification, nomination, and approval process for "black book" assignments.

  f. Explore ways to augment the current promotion and evaluation system to include incorporating external assessment & evaluations (e.g. CTC rotations and proponent evaluations/assessment of future potential[3]) on promotions boards

  g. Explore expanding warrant officer authorizations for occupational specialties requiring subject matter experts (cyber, nuclear weapons, etc.); decreasing enlisted and officer authorizations and increasing opportunities to transfer to the warrant officer corps.

  h. Explore options to enforce guidance to provide most full-time students with follow-on assignments one-year out to enhance a student's ability to study subjects relevant to the next assignment as appropriate. Assignments could be pinpoint (e.g. AFRICOM) or general (e.g. Germany) depending on the situation.

  i. Consider adjusting the voluntary transfer incentive program (VTIP) process to improve the ability of Soldiers to occupational specialties to fit with their particular

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[3] Raters and senior raters often evaluate officers on performance in the current job but not additional activities of potentially equal or greater importance for future jobs, e.g. language development, college courses, certifications, or self-development training/education. A rating from the proponent office for each branch/functional area would tell the board how well a Soldier or civilian has prepared themselves for future positions by learning skills with little utility for the current job. Proponents should also develop methods to assess individual talents to improve assignments.

training, education, and experiences. One possible method would be to assign points based on experiences and the strength of the gaining and losing branches.

j. Consider consolidating assignment management for all components in one location and organization.

k. Examine the Navy apprenticeship program as a potential model for Army Soldiers, especially engineers.

l. Develop proposals for improving the civilian work force. Proposals might include
   1) Extending the probationary period for new employees from 1 to 2 or 3 years
   2) Instituting a pilot program for 360 degree assessments for DA civilian managers

EVIDENCE:
1. LTG Brown's 13 Aug discussion at the Operational Environment Panel of senior Army leaders
2. CAC Leadership Development Paper to NCFA, doctrine, and strategies
3. Fort Bliss comments from 32nd AAMDC, NIE Cyber, and Cyber COE personnel
4. Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond (Link)
5. Officer Corps Strategy for Success, Strategic Studies Institute Series (Link)
6. Secretary of Defense Public Comments (Link)
7. Whole Soldier Performance Paper, May 2010
8. Congressional Research Service, Pay-for-Performance: The National Security Personnel System September 17, 2008. (Link)
9. USMA Branching Process (Link)
10. Army Talent-based Branching - Overview and Current Status Information Paper, 12 June 2015
11. Army Green Pages (Beta) White Paper: "Right Leader, Right Place, Right Time," October 2012
12. Staff discussions with members in various Army and DOD organizations
13. Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What it Means for Europe, Gustav Gressel, October 2015

Possible Vignettes:
1. Signal 1LT who cannot transfer to Cyber despite being the only Army officer working the Cyber Defense team at NIE.
2. Army War College and Military Academy professors selected for fully-funded doctoral programs but not selected for promotion including a West Point Professor promoted below the zone to Major, sent to a fully-funded PhD program, and being separated one year into utilization (is MEL IV complete).

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